CATS NEWSLETTER

The Official Journal of the Capital Area Timex/Sinclair Users Group

Presidential Ramblings

Wishing you the best for the Seasons and a Happy Holidays. Come to the December meeting for fun, food, and merriment. See you all there.

1992 Meeting Dates

This year the group was able to get every second saturday of the month for our meetings. So we're back to our old schedule and time. Just for the record, here are the dates for the next year.

11	January
8	February
14	March
11	April
9	May
13	June
11	July
8	August
12	September
10	October
14	November
12	December

Holiday Party

by Hank Dickson

UNCLE CLIVE's HOLIDAY PARTY
COMES TO NEW CARROLLTON DECEMBER 7

Believe it or not, the time is rapidly approaching for the sixth CATS Holiday Sinclair Celebration. And it's something YOU can be a part of while at the same time making history, if you're so inclined.

THE PROCEDURE

1. Participation is strictly voluntary.

2. If you want to partake, locate a piece of Sinclair-friendly software or hardware you think might warm the cockles of another Sinclair enthusiast's heart. Or, any item intended for the general computer hobbiest would also be appropriate. Something unique would probably be more treasured than just something expensive (oh, sure!).

3. Wrap the gift simply, omitting any identifying references.

4. Bring the gift to the CATS meeting on December 7th, and place it under the Hierarchical Tree.

Seasons Greetings

Contents

Key Dates

7 December: CATS Meeting
      11:00 Workshop
      1:30   Executive Board Meeting
      2:00   General Meeting

23 December: Newsletter Deadline
                For the Next Issue

12 January: CATS Meeting

From The Editor:

Happy Holidays to all. Since I am writing this in mid-November I am refering to them all.

This month we have a bunch of short (but interesting) articles. Most come from three persons. My thanks go to them for providing them.

At the last meeting I had two things to show off; my new daughter and my new Pen-based laptop. The first item is the cause for my not getting to use the second item very much. I have to squeeze my computer time into those times when Caitlan is sleeping or otherwise occupied.

I'm working on transfering data from the laptop (MS-DOS) to the QL via the serial port. Most of details depend on getting the serial ports configured right (parity, handshaking, etc). Getting the cables right was easy. I got lucky on my first try. I'll provide more details when I get it all worked out.

I hope to see you all at the December meeting. I've dug through my computer closet to find a few items for the gift exchange. Being a collector I find it hard to let things go, I do need to clean out the computer closet once in a while. (My wife keeps confusing it with the baby's closet, even thought the computers and the baby share the same room. :-))

Until next meeting,

Happy Hacking,

Tim

5. Later, you and your colleagues will randomly select new presents from all the unmarked gifts.

6. When you open your gift, you may exchange it immediately for any gift which has been opened ahead of you.

7. Even if you are supremely satisfied with your selection, you must leave it in plain view for all to see in case somebody coming after you wants to exchange it unilaterally with yours.

8. The person drawing first will, at the end of everything, have the choice of any gift in the whole universe.

WHAT TO DO

Right now you should begin going through your Sinclairmemoroblia to pick out that one item which will make the holiday of another CATS member complete!

Make plans to find your way to the New Carrollton library Saturday, December 7, to celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with your friends and fellow home-computerists!!

As one CATS said to another last month, "I'll meet you at the Hierarchical Tree!!"

Computers and Biophysics
By Mannie Quintero

Did you know that there's a working computer which is based on protein molecules? Neither did I until I read about it in "DISCOVER" magazine of November 1991. The article title is "Bytes of Life" by David H. Freedman. Title sounds a little cannibalistic, don't it? It's worth your trouble to read. (If it develops into a living entity, might there not someday be a QUANTUM LAP?

Program Schedule
By Mannie Quintero

Happily some of our CATS members are not body-builders or iron-pumpers, hence their arms are not exaggeratedly muscular and thus have been fairly easy to twist. Whence the arm-twisting?? Why, from the need to arrange presentations for the information and edification(does that word mean building buildings?) of our members at our monthly meetings. We now have a relatively firm schedule set up which covers up to June 1992, with some "possibles" for later. The corps of presenters represents just a small portion of our members.

Mayhap the fault be mine in not having been more energetic in beating (brow-beating?) the bushes looking for CATS willing to perform or in offering encouragement or enthusiasm to our more bashful members. We have all levels of knowledge and skill with various computers represented in our membership list and it should be remembered that ALL machines and skill-levels SHOULD be represented on our stage. Surely something you are doing with your machine could be of interest to the rest of us! So, come on, and show us. (I have installed several phone numbers at my housse to take care of the influx of calls from all you volunteers.)

Jan EPA Reporting via Computer -- Duane Parker

Feb Development of the CATS Bookkeeping Program -- Barry Washington

Mar Concept 3-D, The House that Mark Built -- Mark Fisher

Apr Non-hardware PC to QL Transfers -- Tom Robbins

May Task Sequencing Language in Xchange -- Mannie Quintero

Jun Catalog Program, the Alternate Approach --Duane Parker

Status Report on CATS QL Library
By Herb Schaaf

Well over a year ago I agreed with Tom Robbins to work on a library of QL programs from the members. Tom produced Disk#1 with a selection of programs and utilities from the QUANTA collection. He also did Disks #2 and #3; #2 being games and #3 a set of tutorials on the Pascal and C programming languages.

I put #4 into the collection as a grab bag of stuff I'd typed in from magazines, some odd bits I had written myself along with a rudimentary README file and some incomplete typing practice. Dave Bennett brought in Disks #5 and #6 from Toronto, Canada. Disk #5 and #6 have programs written in German and French as well as English, along with lots of graphics files. For the December 1990 meeting Tom Robbins selected some games and put them together with a nice menu as 'Games Disk' #7.

Tim Swenson contributed a lot of his Small-C work along with some public domain goodies on Disk #8, and Tim increased the international flavor of the collection with Disk #9 from the Netherlands, known as the 'Dutch Disk'. Tim may have another disk coming from an Italian source! We welcome contributions from all members.

What we could use now are some reviewers to try out items in the collection and make comments. Tom Robbins has been very busy with his career lately, and I welcome any thoughts you may have on the CATSQL Library. While not yet in the library there are versions of the work in progress for the Archive & cataloging project available from Duane Parker and myself.

Icehouse
by Hank Dickson

Two years ago this December, CATS members were entertained by a demo of a locally developed game called ICEHOUSE. The originators of the game---generally University of Maryland graduates working at Goddard Space Flight Center---showed how their boardless board game goes when played by experts.

In Icehouse, players play whenever they want without waiting for a "turn". The playing pieces are colorful plastic pyramids which get involved in abstract attacks and defenses.

About six of the original 100 game sets fell into CATS hands (or 3paws, as the case may be). None have been available since.

In the interim, there have been three international Icehouse tournaments each May at the New Carrollton Howard Johnson's or Sheraton (or whatever) in conjunction with a big science fiction convention.

A sprightly newsletter is published at irregular times for registered set owners.

U.S. Patent No. 4,936,585, "Method of Manipulating and Interpreting Playing Pieces", was issued June 26, 1990, which has permitted the inventing team to seek underwriting and production proposals. A new generation of Icehouse sets is in the works, but it will be some time before they can be marketed.

Meanwhile, a clever "Origami" Icehouse surrogate set has been developed with 60 die-cut cardboard pieces to provide the "feel" of the game when an official game set is not available.

(See ordering information elsewhere in this issue.)

October Meeting Subject

By Hank Dickson

Featured at the October general meeting was a presentation by longtime CATSmember HERB SCHAAF about the group's ongoing software project involving the QL and its database package, ARCHIVE.

Begun by Herb and DUANE PARKER almost 18 months ago, the project's purpose is to devise a cataloging program which will allow a user to keep track of diskettes and mdv's while taking advantage of the relational data base power of Archive.

They made up wish lists of what they would like to put into and get out of Archive. They also decided that their front-end processor would have to:

    Be simple
    Be mostly automatic
    Require little keyboarding
    Capture existing data from the
      media being used
    Mark the diskettes as
      catalogued

(NOTE: The last point above was a large point of divergence between Herb and Duane: Herb said diskettes were not to be physically marked; Duane said it was O.K.)

Starting in July, 1980, Herb and Duane went to work using SuperBasic to create routines that produce essentially the same results, although traversing different paths. They devoted whatever time was available between monthly meetings to producing code and comparing results.

They constantly discussed their work with other CATS members and earnestly solicited comments and suggestions. Interim versions were made available to interested members.

Herb put together an excellent slide show for the October meeting using his QL and the group's Mega-Mega Color TV. He described the history of data base packages developed for the ZX-81, the T/S 2068, and the QL. He then described his program which extracts data from the disks, and allows for user comments to be included in Archive.

Finally, Herb took the nine diskettes containing the CATS QL library, processed them through his SuperBasic program, then took the two summary files (media_exp and files_exp) holding information from all of the directories and headers of all nine disks, and imported these two files into Archive. At that point the sorting and indexing capabilities of Archive took over.

Finding individual files, duplicate files, and similar things became extremely easy. So did arranging all files alphabetically or in sequence by creation date.

Because of time constraints, Duane opted to describe his solution to the cataloging exercise at a meeting early next year. At that time, we should appreciate Duane's work all the more because of the background provided to us by Herb.

In any case, we will all be looking forward to that second Saturday of the month when Duane drops the other shoe!!

The NEC 3515 Printer

By Herb Schaaf

I could not get a long document to print out at 9600 baud, nor at 1200 baud, but it did just fine at 300 baud. I also find that the NEC3515 works with a parity of NONE to ser1 with the following pin-to-pin connections:

```
QL ser1                   NEC 3515
pin#                      pin#
 1
 2 ----------------- 2
 3 ----------------- 3
 4 -------------- 5&6&8&20
```

```
5  ---------------  4
6
7  ---------------  7
8
9
```

For the install printer choices
I used the following:

```
Preamble          : ESC,SUB,'I,NUL
Postamble         : FF
Bold on           : ESC,'W
Bold off          : ESC,'&
Underline on      : ESC,'E
Underline off     : ESC,'R
Subscript on      : ESC,'U
Subscript off     : ESC,'D
Superscript on    : ESC,'D
Superscript off   : ESC,'U
```

For the extended multilingual character set, ASCII 14 is SO Shift OUT and ASCII 15 is SI Shift IN. So send chr$(14) and 60,62,64 to 95 for those funny unprintables and then chr$(15) to return to the normal ASCII printable stuff.

Getting It In(to) The NEC

By Mannie Quintero

So, you might say,"this guy can't spell for beans,so why should I read anything he says?"

Well, if you were one of the lucky ones who got a NEC Spinwriter Model 3515, through the good offices of Tom Robbins, these words, ahead, might save you some cogitation and frustration.

If you attended the September meeting, you might recall that good old Herb S. did some blackboard art for all to see and learn from. He had done a lot of work in getting his NEC to print.

His tables were as follows;

FOR THE DIP SWITCHES AT THE LEFT, REAR CORNER OF THE PRINTER AFTER YOU REMOVE THE COVER:

SW	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ON			X			X	X	
OFF	X	X		X	X			X

LEFT, FRONT PANEL DIP SWITCH

SW	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ON	X					X	X	
OFF		X	X	X	X			

NEXT SWITCH TO RIGHT

SW	1	2	3	4
UP	X	X	X	X
DOWN				

NEXT SWITCH TO RIGHT

SW	1	2	3	4
UP				
DOWN	X	X	X	X

LAST SWITCH TO RIGHT

SW	1	2	3	4
UP	X	X	X	X
DOWN				

THUMB-WHEELS FOR;
SPEED SETTING - 6
FORM LENGTH SETTING - 13

WIRING FOR SERIAL CABLE.
USE IN SERIAL ONE ON QL.

NINE PIN TO 25 PIN D CONNECTORS

(QL END)	SIGNAL	(NEC END)
7	GROUND	7
2	XMIT DATA	2
3	RECV DATA	3
4	DTR	5,6,8 & 20

SETTING FOR PRINTER DRIVER:

SER 1 E H R (meaning 8 bit,even parity, handshake, and raw data (see QLUG "devices"
Note: if you install(_bas) the printer driver for standard serial printer, you will not be able to set the EHR items, so when you set ser1, the default setting turns out to be RH (8 bit with no parity and handshake).
If you use a non_standard serial setting in install, you will be able to set the EHR part.

Herb also stated that each "print thimble needed its own setting on the switches marked SW on front panel. Given the fact that the printers were used in a network-style system, I assume that all the thimbles are the same, to

wit, Pica-10; Multilingual-A.
You can find the marking by opening
the white, hammer cover and reading
what is printed on the thimble.

This is where I started with my
"experiments".

First, I confirm the wiring of
the serial cable.

Second, I use the 8 setting on
the SPEED setting. This is 9600
baud and 9600 MUST be set in
printer driver (by install_bas).
(They gotta match). Use whatever
setting you want.

Third, FORM LENGTH should be 66
on the NEC AND in printer driver.
(Or less, if you wish.)

Fourth, my front-panel settings
are (on the 8 switch DIP);
 ONE, off (on remote when you
power-up, so you don't try to print
with the NEC off-line)
 TWO, on (which sets FF switch so
that pressing FF gives only one
line-feed)

 THREE, off(clearing all horizontal
tabs)
 FOUR, on (setting automatic CR at
line end)
 FIVE, on (setting X-ON/X-OFF
protocol)
 SIX, on (lets you BREAK(interrupt
printing)
 SEVEN, either (has no effect)
 EIGHT, off (the normal position)
(See the Manual [not the Manuel]
for use of this switch.)
 The foregoing should permit you
to get your NEC working on
letter-quality output from QUILL...

Use normal procedure for direct
printing from the keyboard, i.e.
OPEN#n,ser1(use whichever settings
you want, but remember that they
must match what the printer
expects), CR, PRINT#n,"text...." ,
CR, and CLOSE#n, CR when done(so
you release the ser port for other
programs to use.

JACKSONVILLE, FL. 32204, ALONG
WITH MATT MATHIESON AND JACK
DOHANY FOR MAKING SUPERBOOT I
POSSIBLE.   JOE

2068 Disk Utility: Superboot
By Joe Miller
Public DOMAIN/SHAREWARE/FD68/V9

Super Boot gives the FD68 user
utilities not found on the
original Aerco Dos. Super Boot
contain's three programs on one
disc. The programs are
1.   SUPERBOOT I--(SBI.BAS)
2.   SUPERBOOT II-(SBII.BAS)
3.   INDEX III   -(INDEX III.BAS)
                  (INDEX III.BIN)
BOTH SBI & SBII are utility
programs, when placed on a disk
will install themselves on your
disk as the autorun BOOT. bas
program. BOOT.bas will allow the
user to walk thru the director
of an Aerco disk & LOAD, SAVE,
FORMAT,ERASE, READ DISK HEADER,
ECT. of any file that is
highlighted by the cursor. There
is no need to type
-filename+.ext-is required for
normal Aerco syntax. Superboot I
is for those Aerco users with
DOS version #9. Superboot I was
first written in 1986 and has
been rewritten several times to
evolve into it's present form.

SUPERBOOT II is similar to
SUPERBOOT I, but has additional
features including pull down
menu, support for 63 catalogue
listing, generic file scan
routine, mass file copy, bank
switching, ect., but requires
the AERCO DOS VERSION #9 EPROM.
It is highly recommended that
you contact AERCO for an update
because it supports 63/95 cat
listing, full Aros and Lros
implementation, and partial
spectrum compatibility.

INDEX III is a program written
by Matt Mathieson of the North
East Florida T/S User Group and
modified by John Kuhn. Index III
allows you to CAT your Aerco
disks and dump their Catalogue
listing to a tasword II
compatible file that can be
annotated and used to archive
disk listing. This ends part one
of SUPER BOOT. THANKS TO JOHN
KUHN OF 1707 KING ST.

More PSU Stuff
By Herb Schaaf

Barry Washington reports a burnout of a diode in a modified QL Power Supply Unit (PSU). See "Tweak & Tinker" in the October 1990 CATS newsletter describing the use of "spare" extra diodes from a modified QL PSU for dropping the voltage delivered to the QL. Barry said his QL stays on for days at a time, and the diode failed by opening. When he took the PSU apart there was evidence of severe overheating of the plastic casing. Be aware of this possible overheating mode and check to see how hot your PSU is getting, especially if you leave it on for days at a time. Barry has replaced the diodes which were enclosed inside the PSU with an externally ventilated power resistor to drop the voltage.

Along the same lines, Bob Diggs reports that Miracle Systems Gold Card warns against the use of Q-Power (anybody know what that is?) and says to only use the original Sinclair PSU with the Gold Card, and not to unplug the power cord from the QL to turn it off and on.

Cookie Bulletin

Here's what we need:

> About six or eight CAT-meisters to obtain or create a dozen or so of their favorite cookies.

> These can then be brought to the CATS Holiday-fest on December 7, at the New Carrollton library.

> When combined with the Programmer's Punch provided by the Executive Board, these will become the basis of some festive celebrating.

> This involves NO COMMITMENTS!! No phone promises. Just come as you are and do what you like!!

CATS Newest Members
By Hank Dickson

Saturday, November 2, 1991 was the date of a very special visit to CATS by its youngest attendee ever.

She was CAITLAN ANNE SWENSON, daughter of TIM and CATHERINE SWENSON.

Barely five weeks old, Caitlan Anne arrived at the New Carrollton library warmly swathed in her combo car-carrier/infant-seat on a pleasant autumn afternoon. She was accompanied by her mother, Catherine, and Tim's mother, Mrs. LINDA WILSON.

Caitlan Anne took advantage of the discussions at the general meeting to enhance her "quality nap time". She did, however, raise a loud protest when President DUANE PARKER announced the February meeting would be in Adelphi, rather than New Carrollton. (It evidently had something to do with extra travel time.)

TIM ACORD also brought to the same meeting an excellent photo array of his wife RONEY and their daughter KALEIGH ELIZABETH, who was born September 12. He said he would be talking with his wife about a counter-family-expedition sometime after the Spring Thaw.

In the meantime, Las Vegas bookies are accepting wagers that these two young ladies will---in years to come---turn up as superb leaders of the Class of 2009, Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology.

GUESS WHAT? WE'VE GOT ICEHOUSE SETS FOR SALE!

We recently had a mental breakthrough that has allowed us to begin manufacturing and selling Icehouse game sets even though we haven't yet managed to swing the major business loan required to produce large-volume high-impact plastic playing pieces. The secret? Die-cut punch-out-and-fold-up cardboard pieces!

These "origami" Icehouse pieces are obviously a good deal less attractive than the translucent plastic pieces we hope to be selling someday. However, they are cheap to make and cheap to buy and you CAN use them to play Icehouse. And as a matter of fact, they are surprisingly functional. Even though they're cardboard, they end up being pretty sturdy. Also, if you take the time to fill them with aquarium gravel and glue them shut, they end up being really pretty nice.

We've enclosed a sample set of 3 "Origami" Icehouse pieces with this letter, so that you can put them together and see for yourself. One important tip: The fold marks have a side that protrudes like a ridge and a side that's indented like a gouge. For the best results, fold the pieces together with the ridge side inside and the gouge side outside.

Along with these new pieces, we're also selling a new improved version of the rulebook. It's called *The Condensed Icehouse Handbook*. (Why "condensed?" Because it's an abridged and compacted version of *The Icehouse Handbook*, which we plan to publish when we do start making injection-molded plastic pieces.)

What all this means is that you can now get a complete Icehouse set for only FIVE DOLLARS. Isn't that amazing? We hope to sell a lot of these new game sets, so please buy one. Get your friends to buy one, too. Supplies are NOT limited. Complete ordering information is printed on the reverse.

P.S. - Don't get discouraged if you have trouble putting your sample pieces together. The first few are always the most difficult.
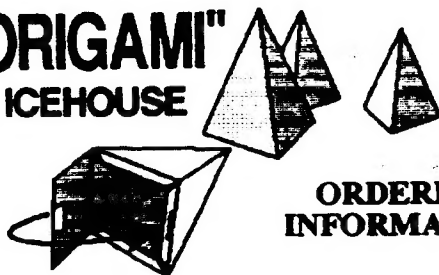
"ORIGAMI"
ICEHOUSE

ORDERING INFORMATION

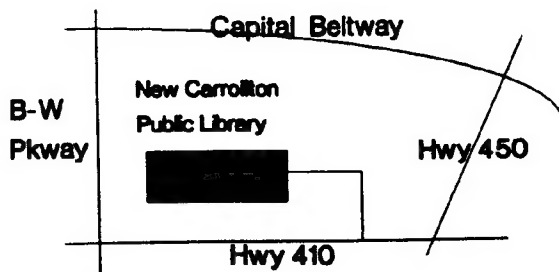|	
Complete "Origami" Icehouse Set	$5.00
(4 player set: 60 die-cut cardboard pieces and complete rules)	
"Origami" Icehouse Pieces	$3.00
(60 die-cut cardboard pieces)	
The Condensed Icehouse Handbook	$3.00
(The rule book included in the Complete Set)	

"Origami" Icehouse Sets and Pieces are available in either Standard Colors (red, yellow, blue, and green) or Neon Colors (purple, orange, hot pink, and lime green). Please specify color choice when ordering.

For each item, please add $1.25 for postage. Maryland residents include 5% sales tax. Make checks payable to Icehouse Games, Inc.

Icehouse Games, Inc.
P.O. Box 761
College Park, MD 20740

Meetings

Monthly meetings are held from 11:00 AM to 4:30 PM, on the second Saturday of each month, at the New Carrollton Public Library.

Newsletter

Memberships cost $15 per year, are good for 12 months, and include all privileges (access to libraries, group buys, etc.). A newsletter only subscription is available for persons living outside the Washington Metro area and is $12 per year.

Networks

Timex SIG on Compuserve: Wednesday night, 10:00 PM Eastern time (GO CLUB).

QZX BBS: (505) 522-7081 FIDO net 15, node 6. East Coast dial (703) 547-4815 FIDO net 18, node 9.

CATS BBS: (301) 588-0579, 8-N-1, 300/1200 baud. News and general information, 24 hours a day.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

The next meeting of CATS will be held on: December 7, 1991

11:00 AM Hardware Workshop
2:00 PM General Meeting

New Carrollton Public Library 7414 Riverdale Road (Hwy 410), New Carrollton, MD

IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF CATS. THIS IS THE ONLY ISSUE YOU WILL RECEIVE